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CHRISTIAN  
PRINCIPLE  
AND  
MENTAL CULTURE  

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DR. OLIN

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Theological School

IN CAMBRIDGE.

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The Bequest of  
CONVERS FRANCIS, D.D.



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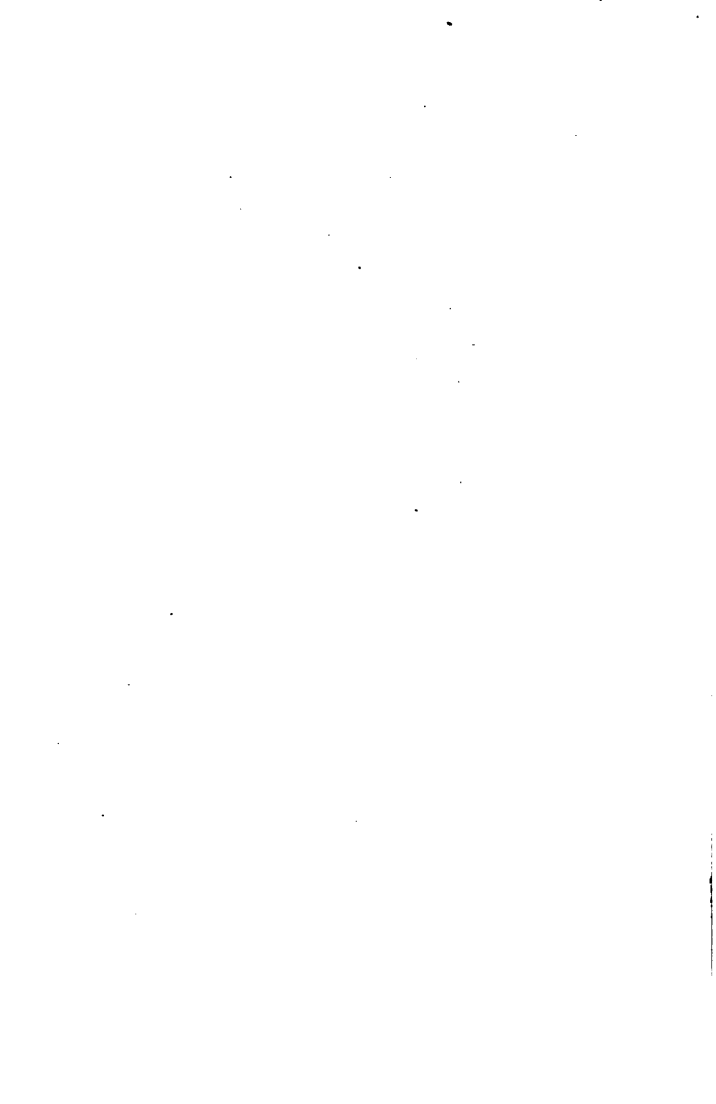
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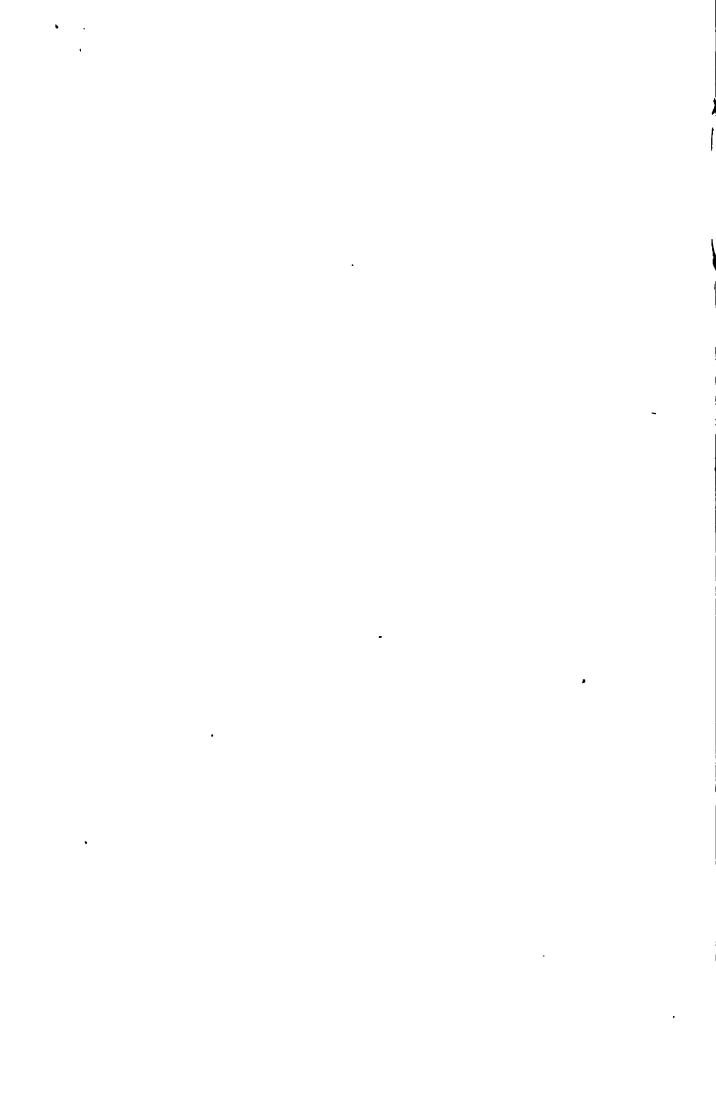
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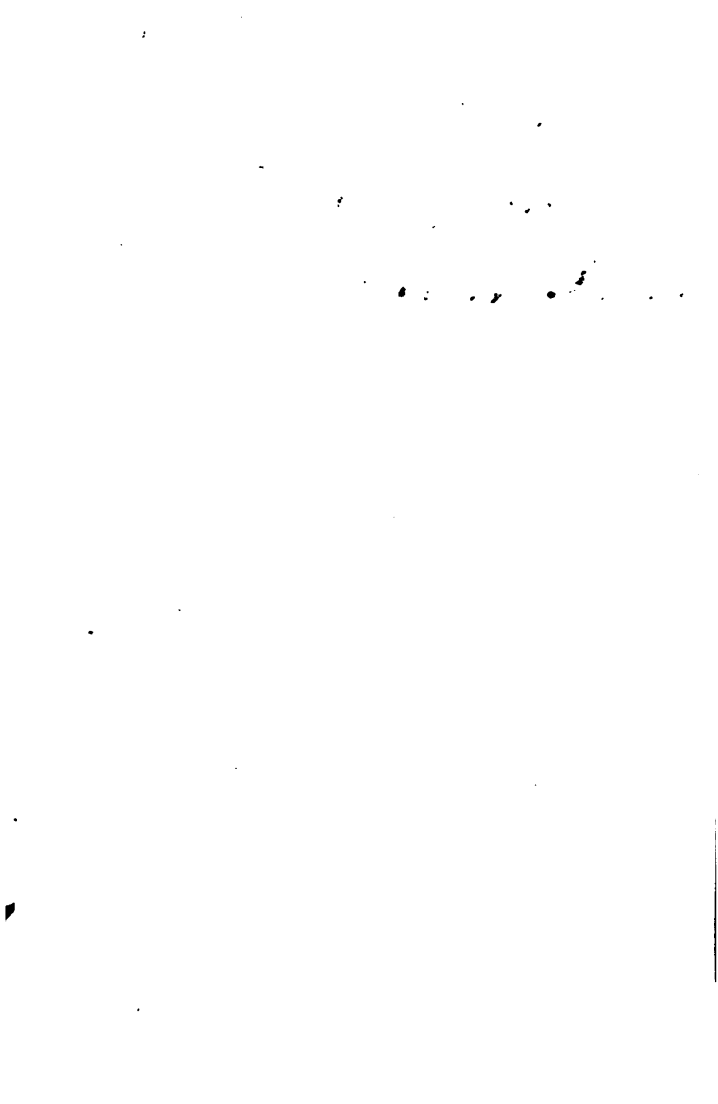
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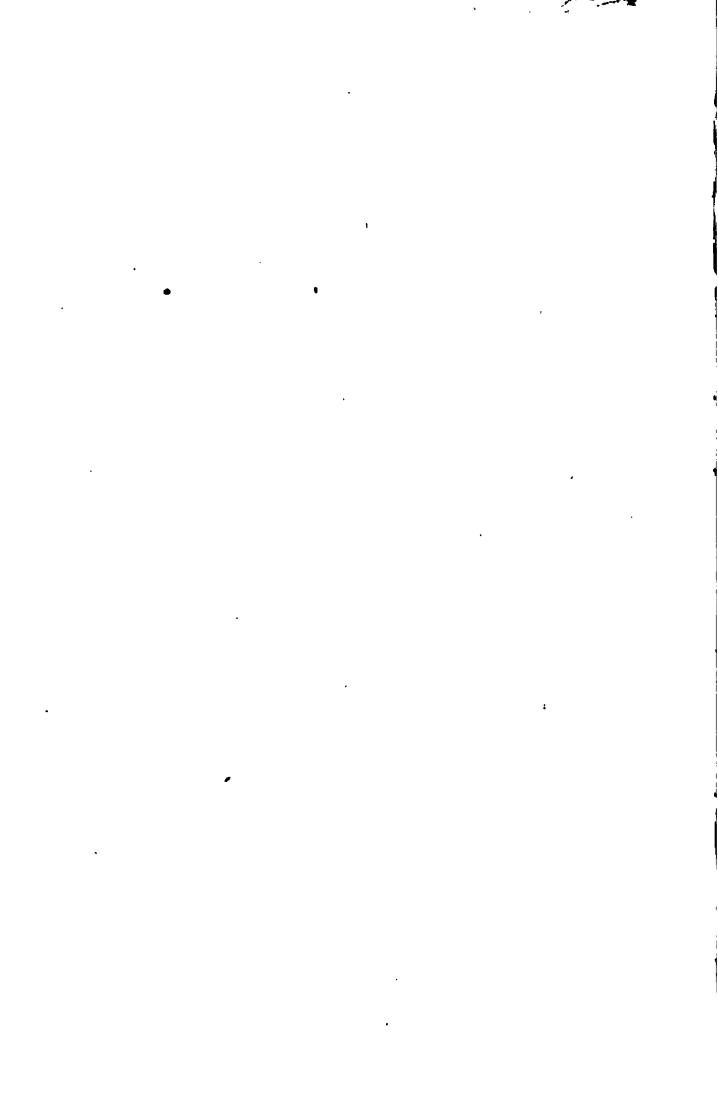


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THE RELATIONS  
OF  
CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE  
TO  
MENTAL CULTURE.

A Discourse to the

GRADUATING CLASS OF WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY,

JULY 1848.

BY STEPHEN OLIN, D. D.

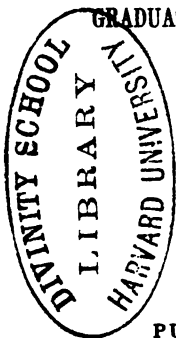
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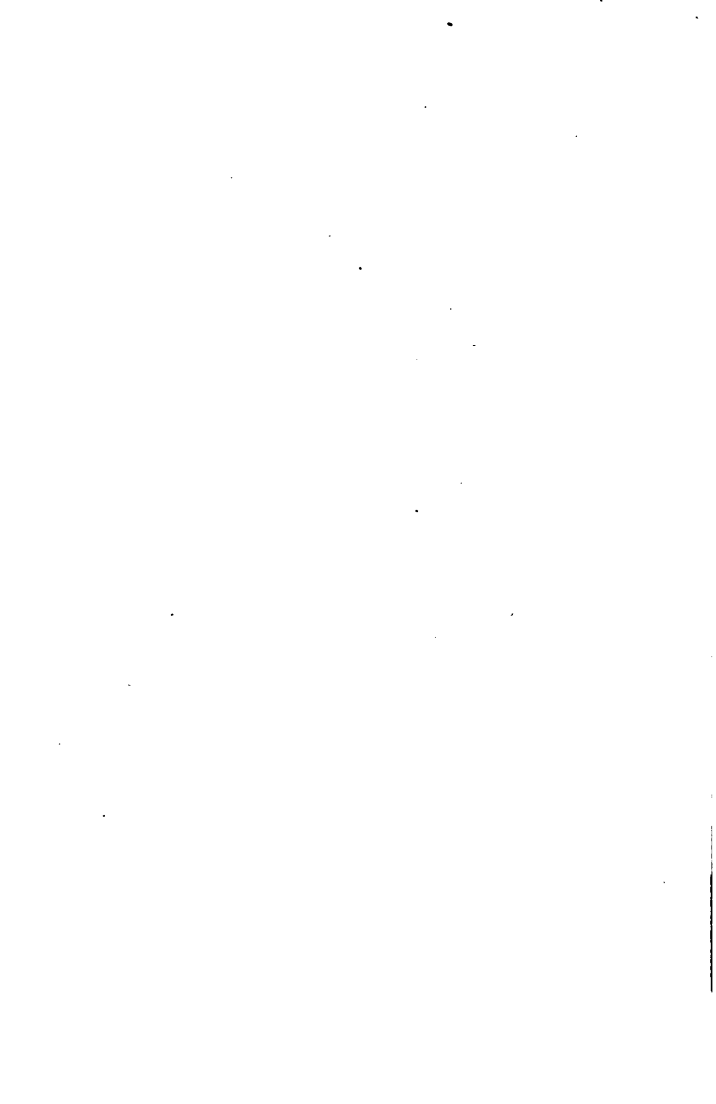
THE RELATION  
OF  
CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE  
TO  
MENTAL CULTURE.

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*As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.—Prov. xxiii, 7.*

It is a recognized principle of ethical philosophy, no less than of the gospel, that the quality of actions, considered as virtuous or vicious, resides wholly in the intention. The external bodily movement, which we term the action, and which is the apparent cause of the effect produced, has really no moral character. It is neither good nor evil in itself; and in forming our judgment of human conduct we might reject the external manifestation altogether, had we some other clew to the mental condition of which it is the exponent. But "the tree is known by its fruit." It is by attentively observing the

actions of men that we are enabled to arrive at satisfactory conclusions concerning their intentions, which alone are deserving of either praise or blame. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." He may be a thoroughly good man—"pure in heart," just in the sight of God; and yet, through some fault of his position, or some negligence, or some untowardness in his methods of manifestation, he may impress the beholder unfavorably—may incur a most undesirable reputation. He may, on the contrary, studiously maintain all the decencies and semblances of many virtues; may, for sinister or selfish ends, perform good deeds rivaling in their number and usefulness the highest achievements of the most approved and unquestionable piety; without making the slightest approach toward the fulfillment of his duties as a moral being: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Outward performances are of no worth apart from the motives in which they originate. The same overt act is either a virtue or a crime, according to the intention of the agent. Several men bestow money upon a poor





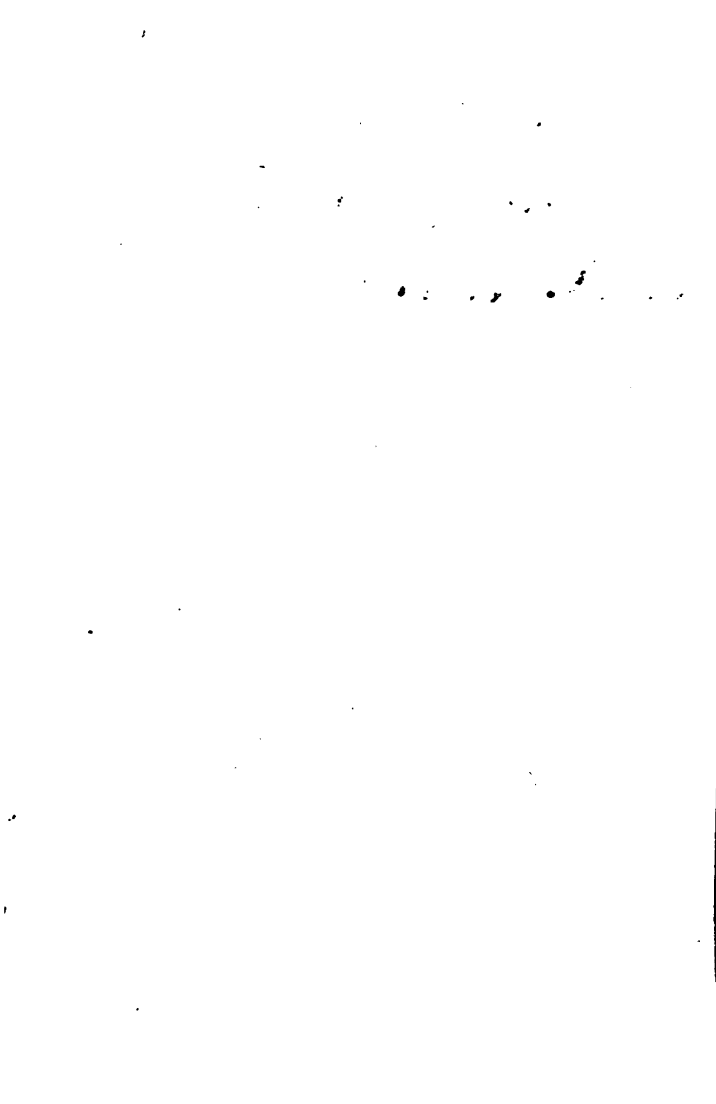


Rev. Dr. Francis  
With respects of  
Geo. W. Frost

Compte rendu

pour l'exercice 1888

de la Société



time receives its impulses, its elevation, and its tendencies, from the particular ideas upon which it is employed ; its general character must, to a great extent, be not only affected, but formed, by that unbroken succession of ideas with which it is conversant, the most influential and important of which are derived from those profound convictions and stable purposes usually denominated the *principles*. Dismissing these too metaphysical forms of expression, into which I have been led in quest of clearness and precision, it may be stated in general terms, that a man's moral and intellectual character are as "he thinketh in his heart"—are as those deep and earnest thoughts which constitute the moving forces of the soul, and which regulate the life.

I think we may now regard the doctrine of the text as sufficiently elucidated. It strikes me much like a self-evident proposition, the announcement of which brings with it the clearest conviction of its truth. It falls in with every man's experience, and every man's observation—with the nature of things, and the word of God ; and we may

now feel at liberty to proceed with some inferences and applications of a practical character, adapted to the special demands of this occasion. I will subjoin but one more preliminary remark. If it shall seem to any that I lose sight of the differences between moral and intellectual objects, and confound ideas logically and really distinct, I refer them to the further developments of this discourse, for the justification of a method deliberately adopted from a strong conviction that every just theory of intellectual training must recognize a dependence nearly absolute upon moral principles.

I. It is a natural and obvious inference from the preceding discussion, that every man, and especially every educated young man, should furnish himself, as early as may be, with enlightened, stable principles of action. He should set out in the world with a well-considered and earnestly adopted theory of life, in obedience to whose controlling authority his ends shall be chosen and his efforts prosecuted. To engage in a career involving consequences profoundly interesting in themselves, and eternal in

their duration and influence, without settled principles and aims, is like setting sail upon the broad ocean with no specific destination; and consequently with no reason for choosing one direction rather than another, but such as capricious gales, or more capricious fancies, may from time to time happen to supply. Nothing less than discomfiture and disaster could be expected from such a beginning. It is indeed among things possible, that propitious breezes may waft the unpiloted bark into some desirable haven; and even that the fury of the storm may drive the floating wreck upon some green or some golden shore, where reckless adventure may gather rewards never due, and seldom granted to anything but prudent foresight, and well-directed, persevering effort. He is little better than a madman, however, who voluntarily consents to expose the most precious interests of his being to a conflict of chances in which the highest perils are always imminent, and absolute ruin nearly unavoidable; while success, if it come, as the result of fortuitous causes and combinations, is likely to be nearly value-

less, because not foreseen and provided for. That course of life which is entered upon without principle, and conducted without a plan, cannot but be unproductive of either virtue, happiness, or honor. That it is not wholly filled up with misfortunes and disgraces, and rendered to the victim of his own follies one unvaried scene of wretchedness, results from the benignant arrangements of divine Providence, which always protect the imprudent and the vicious against many of the consequences of their misconduct, and secure to all such a measure of enjoyment as shall make life tolerable, even to the most unfortunate, and awaken gratitude in the midst of disappointment and shame. For those who will not be at the trouble of subjecting themselves to the control of principle and duty, it is fortunate to be left in the walks of common, laborious life; where, in the absence of the higher motives which reason and religion supply, domestic instincts and urgent wants are ever at hand to minister their stern impulses to energetic, persevering activity. The great law of necessity, which prescribes to the multitude



their toilsome course of life, is faithful to exact the fulfillment of its duties; but for those whom fortune or parental indulgence, or their own honorable aspirations, allow to choose a higher career, no such safeguard is provided. They must find incentives to action, and guaranties of success, in their own enlightened reason and virtuous resolution. For them to engage in the elevating pursuits which invite their presence, without the moral and mental prerequisites to success, is to incur necessary, unavoidable disasters. In the absence of established principles of action, their efforts will be feeble and fitful. The long labor of preparation will be but a heartless, profitless task, from which feeble temptations and worthless pleasures will ever be sufficient to draw away the wavering, irresolute disciple. Every folly which holds out the promise of stimulating excitement or vulgar merriment; every vice which has a gilded bait to offer; has its eye upon him as a predestined victim. Destitute of any sound principle of action, and therefore without purpose or earnestness, he floats a waif upon a sea of accidents

—he stands idle in the market-place, a laborer out of work, labeled and advertised as a candidate for any and every adventure. I do not hesitate to announce it as my deliberate opinion, that most of the miscarriages of scholastic life are the result of the causes here discussed. Not a few young men enter upon this career without settled principles or purposes. They are conscious of no aims. They know not why they are in a college rather than in a factory or a corn-field. It is no manly, vigorous purpose; no lofty aspiration; no burning zeal for God's glory, or human well-being—that has brought them here. Such motives dignify and consecrate the student's vocation; they hallow all his hours and opportunities; they exalt industry and sobriety, and punctuality and order, into cardinal virtues; they fortify the soul with sturdy resolution, and stir it with sleepless impulses; they set it all a-blaze with scholarly enthusiasm, and lead on even ordinary men, by no means highly gifted, to the attainment of an intellectual and moral efficiency very like genius. The

pursuit of knowledge under such benignant auspices can never be an irksome task. It rather becomes a mission in fulfillment of which, the student works on consciously and genially, growing every day more and more a man, fit to bear God's image in the world, and to act the part of a brother and a benefactor in the great suffering family, of which he is one.

The other class of students, and I must admit that it does not everywhere lack the respectability of numbers, find college work, so far as they do it, mere drudgery. They taste none of the pleasures of science, and they reap none of the higher advantages of education; for these are gained by voluntary, earnest co-operation, with the sources of information and the appliances which literary institutions profess to supply. Something, no doubt, may be gained to taste and general intelligence by breathing a literary atmosphere, and by a half involuntary subjection to the processes of the study and the lecture-room; and if it shall turn out that the literary idler inhales somewhat more of the vital principle, than he

gives out of noxious effluvia for the lungs of others, then there may be advantage in the experiment. But against these benefits, however highly they may be rated, there is to be taken into our account the offset of many fearful evils liable to be suffered and inflicted. The mind without a guiding principle, or recognized vocation, if it be not neutralized and wasted by its own feeble, misdirected, conflicting tendencies, will hardly escape a corrupting thralldom from the accidental or malicious influences to which it is exposed. Refusing its homage to the right and the true, and so spurning the protection of practical virtue, it becomes an easy prey to unsuspected enemies. Other minds, as empty and listless as itself, or the weakest combination of accidents, impose law upon him who will not choose to be his own master. The poor jests that fall from the idler or wag who sits by his side at the dinner-table or in the lecture-room; or the current nonsense of the clique whom chance, or some more formal bond of union, has made his chosen associates; fashion his senti-

ments, and become chief agents in the formation of his mental and moral habits.\* These appoint his aims; and pronounce *ex cathedra* judgments more authoritative than university statutes, or the counsel of the most judicious instructors. In obedience to such oracles it is, that green, unfurnished youths, resolve that the real hinderances to mental improvement and to the development of genius are hard study and solid science; and that some light reading, and vapid declamation—above all, the edifying discourses and flashy criticisms of the coterie—are able to form them great orators, and, if they like, great authors and statesmen. Let it not be imagined that these are mere idle fancies, which disappear with the hour that gives them birth. If they take the guise of very palpable absurdities when exposed in their true point of view, they very often present themselves upon the theatre of practical education as real, insuperable obstacles, in the way of all improvement. They often render attendance on college terms and college exercises

\* See Note A.

nearly useless to the pupil, and the teacher's office a laborious, vexatious nullity. All good influences are lost upon such purposeless, wayward, obstinate minds. The accidents to which they surrender the conduct of their intellect and their lives may, indeed, by rare good fortune, impress upon them some form of intelligence and virtue. Some higher, purer current, of the fickle winds to which they commit their course, may chance to harden into habits not wholly detestable some of the transient phases exhibited in the ever-varying phenomena of their mental progress. Still it would be idle to expect satisfactory results from causes so inadequate, and methods so utterly unsound. Success will be the rare exception—failure the rule. I repeat the opinion already expressed, that here is to be found the source of the manifold grievous disappointments which so often fall to the lot of so-called educated men. There is no reason, in the nature of things, why one-third of college-bred young men should prove unfit for the professions for which liberal education is designed to prepare

them, while nineteen in twenty of all who are apprenticed to mechanics and artisans turn out competent workmen. We do not demand that all educated men shall prove to be geniuses, or shall attain to the highest professional distinction. All, however, not essentially deficient in ordinary mental endowments, are capable of gaining the mental discipline which it is the business of schools and colleges to impart, and which is requisite in the functions to the fulfillment of which society calls its educated men. The thing most requisite to success in these avocations is not brilliant talent, but the due preparation and use of those average capacities which God bestows impartially upon the race. These can only be secured by diligent, persevering study, pursued upon a plan and upon principle; and it is because so large a class of so-called students have neither principle nor plan, that so many of them fall out by the way, and so many others, who manage to pass through college, are destined to a life of mortification and disappointment.

I pass on to another remark. Since

established principles of action are so essential to success, we ought to use great caution in the adoption of our principles, for all are not equally good.

It must be admitted that any effective principle of action, not absolutely vicious, is better than none. Action upon low and adulterated motives is preferable to the intellectual stagnation which results from a want of strong impulses, and earnest, stable purpose. It is better to be driven furiously over rocks and shoals by Borean gales, than to reel and swelter, and take the plague, in the calms of the torrid zone. Still it is a matter of great moment to commence and prosecute our plans of life on an elevating and genial theory ; for in it both moral and mental character are deeply involved.

Many young men choose a literary and professional career in preference to more active and laborious pursuits, from a deliberate comparison of the advantages which each is supposed to offer. They resolve to escape from the plough and the workshop, because they are disgusted with mere manual labor, and fancy that they feel



within them the presence of mental aptitudes, which, with due culture, may raise them to ease or affluence. It cannot be denied that such persons have chosen for themselves a principle of action of great potency, which may stimulate to persevering industry, and even high enterprise. It is a motive of sufficient efficiency to insure stability of purpose and of action, and may, with great probability, lead on to thorough scholarship and professional eminence. It even offers guaranties for correct morals, as well as for mental improvement; for they who are earnestly engaged in serious occupations, have seldom leisure or inclination for vice and dissipation. Self-interest, however, though a highly efficient, and, in the absence of better, a very useful motive, cannot be regarded a worthy principle of action for an intelligent moral being. It is not good, in the long run, either for the intellect or the heart. In its higher developments it is philosophically incompatible with the active existence of several of the most valuable sentiments and virtues that enrich and

adorn the human character. It cannot, for instance, coexist with magnanimity, or benevolence, or generosity, or public spirit. When fairly enthroned as the rule of life, it gradually, but inevitably, loses all kind consideration for the welfare of others, or for any interest that cannot be made subservient to individual aggrandizement; and then it is that we clearly perceive its malignant character. Now this is the point to which it perpetually tends; and that must be pronounced a vicious principle of action which, however useful in special circumstances, becomes intolerable the moment it obtains a full development. Our motives of action, in order to achieve the utmost for character, should be such as gain new force and momentum with our progress in wisdom and virtue; but the motive in question just then grows into a manifest, monstrous evil, fatal alike to virtue, and piety, and happiness. Its influence upon the intellectual character is scarcely less disastrous than upon the moral. The mind which was well-disciplined, under the impulses of a principle of so much energy,

and so sagacious, soon finds itself shut in from all enlargement by a system, of which self, and not man, nor the universe, nor God, is the centre. The heart becomes hard, and the conscience seared, in their perpetual conflicts with the claims of sympathy and charity; and this is equivalent to affirming that all the fountains of genial sentiment are congealed into ice, or indurated into stone. Insensibility to the interests of others is confessedly fatal to all true persuasive eloquence. As the selfish man, sooner or later, becomes an object of indifference or detestation to the world, he can never secure the reputation and the influence needful to move or control other minds. He can no more be a poet than an orator, for he does not love or reverence nature, or man, or God. Nor do I see how he can possibly be a philosopher; how he can attain to the love of truth—except for the gain it may bring him; how he can have a heart to appreciate great discoveries in the earth or the heavens, in any higher spirit than that which rejoices in the acquisition of the precious gem acci-

mentally brought to light in geological researches, or in the glitter and costliness of the instruments with which science prosecutes its inquiries.

It would, perhaps, be unjust to liberally educated men, and yet more to the youthful student, to intimate that selfish motives operate upon them with peculiar force. He has probably surrendered himself to the dominion of more honorable sentiments: he has chosen ambition as his guiding star, and spends the midnight oil amid visions of future renown. I believe that ambition does operate much more frequently and powerfully upon intelligent young men than self-interest; and I gladly admit that it is a far more elevated and honorable principle of action. It emancipates the aspiring mind from a degrading bondage to those material interests which turn away its vision from all things genial and ennobling, and concentrate upon self the expansive sympathies that were meant for mankind. By presenting reputation and influence as the most desirable objects of pursuit, it prescribes the cultivation of

such virtues and accomplishments as render a man agreeable to his fellows, and so far provides for the interest and happiness of the species. Scope is thus given for some exercise of the charities of our nature, and for some degree of the virtues of patriotism and public spirit; an advantage which raises ambition immeasurably above mere gross selfishness as a motive for mental culture. That rule of life, however, is essentially defective and faulty which proposes public favor and applause as a motive for the acquisition of knowledge or the cultivation of virtue. They who follow it, seldom become either wise or virtuous; for they will soon discover that superficial attainments, and the semblances of virtue, are more easy, and not less sure, passports to popularity, than the realities of which they are the cheap substitutes and gaudy counterfeits. Knowledge and virtue come to be regarded only as means, less valuable and less desirable than the ends they are used to promote; and they will be abandoned without scruple for other expedients found to be of equal or greater efficacy.

Thus degraded to the level of mere instruments, they lose their moral character, and, with it, their reflex power over the mind and the heart. It is thus that ambition, which, at the outset, frequently exerts a powerful and conservative influence upon the student, becomes, after no great length of time, a thoroughly misleading element, hostile alike to intellectual and moral advancement. This is its inherent vice, which must operate with greater or less force, even in the study, and throughout the forming period of life. In the turmoil of riper years, and amid the temptations of a public career, its sway often becomes absolute, and not many are found able to resist its deteriorating influences. Indeed, ambition finds little indulgence, even in the judgment of the world. We too incautiously, perhaps, laud an ambitious student; but to apply this epithet to a man of mature years, to a statesman, or an aspirant for office, is equivalent to pronouncing him unworthy of public confidence. Ambition is like self-interest in this, that it ministers useful impulses in the preparatory

stages of life, and in the absence of strong temptations; but it eventually undermines the character, and seduces both the intellect and the heart. When once the ambitious scholar has become an ambitious politician, there is commonly an end to all mental and moral improvement. Tact and demagogueism answer his new aims far better than divine philosophy; and he has entered a region of temptation too strong for ordinary virtue. Party arrangements and obligations are not long in weaving their meshes for the conscience, which soon learns submission to the code of morality that prefers the popular and the politic to the true and the right. A thousand sad histories, fulfilled and fulfilling among us, will tell, without more argument, by what sure, though it may be slow, gradations, the ingenuous, studious youth of twenty-one, is led on by this *ignis fatuus* to be at forty an unprincipled, time-serving demagogue, without principle, reputation, or honorable aspirations. Let every young man beware of surrendering himself to the leading of unchastened ambition. Let him shun, as

the gates of death, the arena of partisan strife and preferment. Let him patiently seek, in some honest calling, independence of all parties and offices. It may be that intelligence and virtue will be wanted some day on the political stage, and he may then ascend it with clean hands and a good conscience, and with the full advantage of all the wisdom and reputation with which he has fortified his character in the innocence of private life.

There is still another motive to literary activity, liable to none of the objections here referred to, which deserves more attention than it has yet received in our places of education. Could we hope to find a considerable number of youths so happily constituted that the love of learning would prove a sufficient stimulus to diligent, persevering application, we should have discovered an incentive to action which the most scrupulous morality could not hesitate to approve. It is a delightful thought, that of an ingenuous young man led on through the schools, and through a studious life, by the strong attractions of



science, irrespective of any interested objects or of any reward, but such as reveal themselves to the understanding and the heart, in the discovery of those great laws which the inscrutable wisdom of God has impressed upon his creation. It is not conceivable that such a principle should interfere with the highest moral development, or that it should fail in leading to the most desirable mental culture. Indeed, it approaches both in purity and efficiency the Christian motive; and but for the too narrow field of its operations, we might be content to leave under its sole guidance all who will not be induced to learn the true philosophy of education from the great Teacher.

In attempting to show that the religion of Christ furnishes the student with the only safe and adequate motive to intellectual effort, I shall take it for granted that, so far as moral character is concerned, the truth of this proposition is conceded by all who hear me. Enlightened infidels do not hesitate to acknowledge the claims of the gospel as the highest, purest source, of

morals; and none but rank, bitter enemies, now-a-days call this claim in question. In addressing myself to Christian young men who cheerfully recognize the excellence of Christianity, even while they may live in neglect of many of its precepts and privileges, I may safely presume that they acknowledge the Bible as the only sufficient standard of moral virtue; and, therefore, the only safe guide in the formation of moral character. That the gospel also furnishes the only safe and sufficient motive and guide to intellectual culture, I shall now proceed to demonstrate. And here I shall claim nothing for religion on strictly religious and theological grounds. I shall only refer to it as a system of truth and duty exerting, and entitled to exert, a strong and permanent influence upon human conduct and character, from its natural and philosophical, no less than from its moral, relations to men. How, then, does Christianity bear upon the question of intellectual education, and minister incentives and aids to high mental improvement?

1. *Its great law of* RESPONSIBILITY *fur-*

*nishes a motive of great and ever-living efficacy.*

Were it possible to lift up the veil which conceals from observation the secret springs of human action, it would be discovered that a deep conviction of accountability to God is the most pervading and powerful of these occult agencies. In the irreligious, this principle chiefly operates in the restraints which it imposes upon their bad dispositions; and to it we must chiefly refer the wide difference between the actual conduct and character of men, and that profounder depravity and overflowing profligacy which would prevail in the absence of all sense of moral and religious obligation. It is, however, upon pious minds that this principle operates with its fullest force. In them every act and enterprise is subordinated to this universal law. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" is the burden of every prayer. They "labor to be approved unto God;" and they are only satisfied with their own performances in proportion as all things have been done with a "single eye." They must

"eat and drink to the glory of God." His claims to homage extend to every "word" and "act;" and they charge themselves to remember that they are to give account for all "the deeds done in the body." Such a conviction of responsibility, in proportion as it is honestly entertained and obeyed, becomes the great law of life; and impresses with its potency, and tinges with its hues, every spring of action and every phase of character.

It will be admitted, I am sure, that this great Christian motive presses upon none with more urgency, or with an authority more imperative and sacred, than upon the young man led by his own inclinations, and allowed by providential circumstances to devote his early years to mental culture. He is engaged in elevating and purifying that part of his nature which constitutes him a man and a child of eternity—for which God manifests his care in all the arrangements of his grace, and for which Christ died on the cross. He is engaged in fitting for high uses the instrument by which alone he can honor God or enjoy him, or promote

the happiness of his fellow-creatures. If there is done on this earth a work of some importance and dignity, the culture of the immortal mind is such a work. To perform this work well, to make the most of these priceless opportunities, is obviously a sacred duty. The student occupies a high and holy trust. By diligence and fidelity in his work, he augments for ever his own powers of happiness and usefulness. He augments the means of happiness intrusted to him for human society. He augments his own capacity for knowing, enjoying, and honoring God. Shall it be thought a slight offense to prove false to such obligations? Shall the man who perverts influence, or squanders wealth, or violates a public trust, be deemed culpable, and is he innocent who robs himself, and society, and God, of talents put in his hands not to be buried or wasted, but to be improved to the utmost? Surely, if God will judge the world in righteousness, and with a rigorous impartiality demand his own, with usury, from every delinquent, the inquisition will press hard upon those who are accused of wasting the most pre-

cious of their Lord's goods—the immortal mind, made to appreciate his character and promote his glory. Upon every student rests this fearful responsibility; and every Christian student will recognize and respect it with a degree of solemn earnestness proportioned to his intelligence and piety. He will feel that “he is not his own”—that his talents and opportunities are only his to improve and employ conscientiously, and to account for in the last day. Under such convictions he can neither idle nor trifle. He will find in them a sleepless, faithful monitor, to rebuke away indolence and apathy; to whisper hope and heroism into his fainting spirit; to prescribe temperance in all things; to endow his hours with such a sanctity that it were sacrilege to waste them; to give law to his resting, his rising, and his recreation; to invoke his profounder respect for statutes and usages established for the maintenance of needful order, and for the protection against all intrusion of time consecrated to study. Such is the *natural* influence, and the *actual*, so far as conscience has fair play, which religion exerts

over intellectual improvement. I grieve to admit that not a few *nominally* Christian students are neither industrious nor law-abiding; though idle and disorderly are epithets as incongruous to their holy profession, as profane and intemperate. It is also saddening to the heart to observe the course of too many Christian young men, after they have passed the earlier stages of literary preparation. They cease to be students as soon as they are fairly launched upon the voyage of life. They are at the zenith of their intellectual greatness at thirty or thirty-five. A modicum of professional lore, a poor pittance of theology, a petty curriculum of pulpit preparation, is all they ever add to the measure of attainment with which they enter upon active life. Progress from henceforth there is none, except in the wrong direction. The starved intellect dwindles for want of fresh supplies of its natural aliment; imagination falters and grows dim, disgusted with its own worn-out imagery; discourse becomes flat and unprofitable, without freshness or point; and at fifty you have a man physically strong, but intellectually

exhausted, incapable of doing anything pleasant or profitable to God or man. Every such sad example implies gross recreancy to Christian obligations. Those who keep the commandment, "add to their virtue knowledge;" they "grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ;" and their intellectual pathway shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.\*

2. Responsibility to God is the most powerful of all motives to intellectual exertion, and it operates upon every conscientious student with a force proportioned to his intelligence and piety. Religion supplies other influences auxiliary to this, which act upon and through some of the strongest principles of our mental and moral constitution. It is an incurable fault of lower motives that they operate unsteadily, and cease, for the most part, to exert any salutary, sufficient authority, at periods of life when the mind is yet vigorous and susceptible of large and rapid progress. Self-interest, as we have seen, soon contracts the intellect and hardens the heart—fatal checks upon progress,

\* See Note B.



deadly foes to all excellence. Ambition puts its votaries upon other expedients than literary efforts for the attainment of success. Disappointment, too, and disgust, with which ambition must generally lay its account, impair and often destroy its efficiency, as a motive to intellectual activity, when the career of honorable enterprise has only commenced. Many a gallant spirit, urged on its course by these unchastened impulses, have we seen stranded and motionless amid the sad wreck of high hopes, long ere his sun had reached its meridian. Now it is the special advantage of the Christian motive, that it acts with a steady, and even increasing, force, to the end of life. No disappointment can chill its energy, for that flows forth upon the soul from inexhaustible perennial sources.

It is also a consideration full of the mightiest impulses, that intellectual growth and amelioration, like moral, are achieved for eternal duration. The labor requisite for acquisition and discipline, is lightened and sweetened by the reflection that it is to qualify an immortal spirit the better to perform its

functions; more perfectly to understand, and more keenly to enjoy, all that God shall reveal or enjoin through the long annals of an endless life. The mind does not die; and he who sends it onward upon its sublime career, enlarged and trained by wholesome discipline, and richly furnished with the knowledge of imperishable truths, "lays up treasure where neither moth nor rust corrupt." Nothing in religion or enlightened philosophy will justify the fear that the high intellectual attributes, with which the redeemed soul enters heaven, may not find worthy and significant employment there. The pious student, then, may exultingly write down for his motto, "I STUDY FOR ETERNITY;" and in so sublime a sentiment will he find unfailing encouragement to patient industry and persevering labor.

3. In nothing perhaps is the great superiority of the Christian, over all other motives, more manifest than in the uniform and powerful co-operation which it secures of the emotional with the intellectual forces of the mind. All work is briskly done when the heart is in it. Eminently true is this

of intellectual labor ; and from the school-boy under the usher's rod, to the grave philosopher, those mental tasks which awaken a lively interest, and are performed with satisfaction, are easily and rapidly achieved. Whatever is attempted under the high sanctions of Christian obligation, possesses this advantage in an eminent degree. It is done to please God, and to glorify his name. It affords, therefore, to the pious spirit, an opportunity, ever eagerly embraced, for discharging a debt of gratitude, and offering testimonials of duty and loyalty. The heart at once warms to such an enterprise, and all the powers of the soul gladly co-operate in a work of an import so high. The Christian scholar is thus enabled to be always in earnest. His love and fidelity to God, and his gratitude to Christ, are concerned in the most effective discharge of this important class of duties, and his prayers and sacraments are not felt to be more obligatory upon him, than the functions of the study and the lecture-room. He learns to prosecute every science, and fulfill every scholastic engagement, under the supervision of

an all-seeing and never-sleeping Eye. How feeble and inconstant are all the motives which selfishness and ambition can furnish, in comparison with those which the love of God, and conscious amenability to him, are able to awaken in the pious heart! Let no one hastily conclude that this is a merely theoretical view of the subject, of no application to the matter in hand. On the contrary, it is a view applicable to every Christian scholar, and constitutes the actual motive of his conduct, in so far as he has any claim to the name of Christian. He studies as he would toil in any other sphere—as, called with a higher vocation, he would preach the gospel, or go upon a mission to the heathen—that he may glorify God in the performance of the duties providentially assigned him. They know little of the deep sentiments and holy aspirations of pious young men in our colleges, who doubt whether they pursue their self-denying career, and struggle with narrow means, and often with feeble health, under the lofty impulses which religion inspires. With very many of them, these, I am sure, constitute

the motive and the solace of their toils ; and I will not hesitate to avow that the example of such young men, toiling on for a series of years, amidst discouragements of many kinds, that they may by and by be qualified for usefulness in the Master's vineyard, has often proved most instructive and sustaining to me, and has admonished me to stand patiently and bravely in my lot, albeit ready to faint under the pressure of burdens disproportioned to my strength.

4. A similar augmentation of spiritual forces comes in upon the pious student from another quarter. Benevolence, and an ardent desire to do good to mankind, take the place of the narrow selfishness which, under less favorable conditions, constitutes the chief incentive to exertion. We know to what heights of self-sacrificing effort and virtue philanthropy has been able to elevate the great benefactors of mankind ; through what dangers, and over what obstacles, it has borne them onward to their angelic achievements. This ambition to mitigate the woes, and augment the happiness, of others, pours all its generous, powerful im-

pulses, into the bosom of many a pious student, and becomes the sleepless monitor of his waking, working hours. As the love of God enlists all the energies and stabilities of Christian principle on the side of earnest, persevering industry ; love to man awakens and presses into the same service all the strong sympathies of our humanity. These are confessedly the most powerful of all the agencies that go to influence the conduct, or modify the character, of men. They minister amazing energy to the mind. They rouse every dormant power into action. They arm the soul with preternatural efficiency. They make the mind inventive, vigilant, and daring. Faith, hope, and charity, have each their functions to fulfill in every department of Christian action, and nowhere else more than in the student's career ; but the greatest of these is charity—the most animating, the most powerful, the most enduring, of all the motives that minister earnestness and encouragement to the Christian student.

5. It will hardly be deemed a diversion from this strain of argument, to remark upon

the elevating, plastic influence, of prosecuting a protracted literary course at the forming period of life, under these lofty, pure, and disinterested motives. You cannot imagine any other course so well calculated to form large-minded, generous, upright men. Whoever makes the will of God, the rule and glory of God, and the welfare of men, the chief objects of his intellectual efforts, through a series of years, subjects his mind, as well as his heart, to a meliorating process of unparalleled efficacy. Nothing base, or degrading, or selfish, should be expected to survive such a course of discipline; and it would be difficult to conceive of any virtue fitted to adorn or strengthen the character, which should not find in it precisely the conditions most favorable to vigorous, ample development.

It is also material to remark, that such a scholastic career tends powerfully to supply the great desideratum in educated men—the harmony of the mind and the heart, the joint working of strong intellect and strong feeling—upon which all great mental efficiency and all true eloquence depend, and without

which the scholar can never hope to wield a great and permanent influence over the most precious interests of man and society. The arts of the rhetorician, however diligently plied, are all at fault here. Rules for managing the voice, or the eye, or the hands, and other physical auxiliaries to persuasion and oratory, can but kindle a cold, lusterless fire, which shall be as the crackling of thorns; while a well-endowed nature, diligently trained by education, and put in harmony with God and itself by religion, shall be able to pour forth, spontaneously, a tide of persuasive eloquence, whenever invoked by a worthy occasion. This, as is well known, is the perfect ideal held up by the rhetoricians to aspirants after forensic reputation; but it mostly escapes them that it is one of those priceless gifts which cannot be won by unsanctified labor, but, in a very important sense, cometh down from the Father of lights.

6. I will add, that education, prosecuted under the auspices of religion, enjoys a great facility, in the freedom of its subjects, from the low tastes, bad passions, and vi-



cious habits, which constitute chief obstacles to proficiency in learning. These are utterly incompatible with sincere piety, and cannot coexist with it; while any Christian profession, not wholly reckless of reputation and consistency, must avoid the grosser and more degrading forms of immorality. Every degree of religious principle and restraint, therefore, contributes a highly important influence toward the success of educational efforts; while deep and ardent piety, welcomed as the guide in literary pursuits, conducts to degrees of excellence and success, unattainable on lower principles.

My inferences from this protracted discussion must be few and brief.

1. Let every young man, especially let every educated young man, pause at the commencement of his career, till he thoroughly comprehends the importance of setting out with a proper theory of life. Let him "arise and shake himself." Let him spurn away from him, for one holy hour, the blandishments of ease and pleasure. Let him burst from the bondage of all unmanly,

unscholarly habits, like a brave, high-toned spirit, resolved to be his own master, and to rule himself well. He should ascend to some lofty mount of vision, some Pisgah, from whose summit the whole land "that remaineth to be possessed" shall be clearly visible to his earnest, honest gaze. Scorning to be hoodwinked and cheated by mere illusions, let him penetrate into the heart and reality of his whole destiny; doing impartial justice to the claims and dignity of the mind, as well as the body—of the distant and the future, no less than of the near and the present. With eternity and God before his eyes, and some reasonable, decent regard for his own well-being, let him come up to the great choice that, once for all, he must make for himself: "If the Lord be God, follow him; if Baal, then follow him." Let him remember that the principle which he adopts becomes henceforward a living, molding influence. It will enter and dwell in the depths of his nature—a well of water springing up and overflowing the soul, imparting to it, through the long ages of the future, its own properties and hues. Re-

member, young man, you are selecting a companion for the voyage of your entire existence, whose manners, habits, and sentiments, so close and long an intimacy will make your own. You are determining what meat your soul shall be nurtured upon; what shall be the complexion of your future being. In forming a library, you would have good, and not bad, silly, corrupting books. In choosing a teacher, or a place of education, you would avoid a driveler, and require the protection of discipline and good order. Your physician must not be a quack, nor a pretender. You are ambitious to give your adhesion to true and approved, not to antiquated and exploded, systems of philosophy. In choosing your principles of action, and subjecting your mind to influences which must form its character and control its destiny, you consent to receive into your bosom an agency more potent than books, or teachers, or schools; more efficient than the physician's most heroic remedies; more authoritative than all the sects of philosophers. You are thus called upon to assert the highest privilege,

and perform the highest function, of a free, redeemed, heaven-born spirit. Show that you are worthy of the sacred trust which God, in his providence, confers upon you—the office of taking care of yourself.

2. Having deliberately adopted a right principle of action, reverence and obey it. Make it the law of your life, from which no temptation, or interest, or accident, shall ever seduce you to swerve. It is an emanation from the divine Wisdom fallen upon you, as a lamp for your feet. It is the sum and highest expression of all genial philosophies. Come what will—*ruat coelum*, “though heaven and earth pass away”—resolve that no jot or tittle of this law shall be marred, or dishonored, or shorn of its authority. It shall be your charmed talisman, before which evil spirits will cry out in despair, or be smitten dumb with terror. It shall be your passport to excellence, and reputation, and power, and honest fame, at the presentation of which barred gates will open before you to all choice and precious things. A conscientious, early, and absolute surrender, of the life to the guidance of duty, brings into

the mind a power far more valuable than would be the acquisition of new faculties: it quadruples the efficiency of the old. It is better than genius or eloquence, and is often a good substitute for them. It simplifies all the movements of life. It cuts short a thousand struggles with temptation and passion. It is a thread of gold in the hands of inexperienced youth and care-worn manhood, to conduct the willing and obedient through the dark, pathless labyrinth, of this world. Ordinary capacity trained and operating under this influence, in the end, outshines and outstrips the best parts without it. Not a class graduates in this, or any other college, which cannot furnish living illustrations of this truth. So profound is my conviction on this point, that I do not hesitate to proclaim it as the true, infallible way to success. Granted a subject for our experiment, not mentally halt, or maimed, or blind, in the possession of merely common faculties; and a liberal education, prosecuted under the auspices of pure, high principles, shall make him every whit a man, fit for any profession or avocation to which

society calls her intelligent, cultivated sons. I must subjoin the additional remark, that nothing begets such utter despair of success in teaching, no matter what the mental capacity, as indifference to moral and conscientious obligations. There is really no hope for a young man who will not listen to the voice of duty. He has fallen a prey to a mortal disease, for which no human skill can provide a remedy. The voice of duty is the voice of God—an inborn, heaven-sent guide. Not to obey it is to revolt against our own constitution; it is as if one should refuse to give heed to the intimations of his senses; his eyes, his ears, or his touch—and will, as certainly, and by as dire a philosophical necessity, bring upon him hopeless, irretrievable misfortune. When this mental disease is once established, I could wish never to see its victim enter the doors of a college, or armed with education, to be no ordinary scourge to himself and society. Let such a one be consigned to some narrow sphere of laborious life, where there is least room to encounter temptation, or exert influence, and where an urgent demand

for strenuous, incessant toil, may counteract and subdue more harmful tendencies.

3. I shall conclude with a very simple practical direction. Always be ready to avow your principles of action. Scorn concealment. Put out your true colors to the gaze of men and angels. There is a false prudence, a mock modesty, which inculcates the opposite method. It discourages confession, as savoring of ostentation, and would have us leave the world to infer the existence of virtuous principle from our conduct. In most instances this is but a paltrone's expedient to avoid responsibility, and save a convenient position for treachery or evasion. It is well and safe to stand committed to the right, that the world may know, in advance, where you will be found in any day of trial; and it is a reflection upon a good man's intelligence or integrity, to have his opinions and principles for ever unsettled, or in doubt. Society has a right to know what it may expect from him; and justly suspects him of interested and dishonest aims, when he chooses to remain undecided and uncommitted till popular suffrage has announced

the safe way. Educated men are the natural sources and guides of popular opinion; and they are bound to stand forth boldly, to battle with prejudice and breast the inundation of passion, though at some risk of being swept away by its fury. The principles of the educated, active, influential men, of every community, generally become its public sentiment. This living embodiment and expression of reason, truth, and righteousness, acts upon the multitude with vastly more directness and efficiency than books of morals and religion; and as it constitutes the most effectual method for the formation and vigorous maintenance of a sound public sentiment, so it is chiefly relied upon for that function. On this account it was that the laws of Athens held that citizen an enemy to the state who remained a neutral in any important crisis or question of general interest. The Redeemer of the world has given to this equitable principle the sanction of religion, and it is only they who *confess* him before men, whom he will confess before the angels in heaven.



Let every one who would not become a mere puppet and time-server, beware of feeling more solicitude for promotion than he does for his principles. If they are to be put down, it is a misfortune and a snare to rise; and he should blush, and suspect himself a knave, who is conscious of grudging the sacrifice which it may cost him to be an honest man. No valuable ends, besides those of selfish or profligate ambition, can ever be secured by such dishonorable successes; and any but a weak or unscrupulous man will prefer to bide his time, and wait for more auspicious days, when God, whose attributes ever side with the right, will pluck its drowned honors from the deep, and make the conscientious and the brave sharers in its triumphs. Whoever covets promotion while his principles are under the ban, must fall back upon the expedients and resources of party, which is always framed and held together by compromises in which principle is sacrificed to policy. Into this turbid maelstrom, from which virtue and conscience never come forth without a stain, good, but am-

bitious men, of facile morality and feeble purposes, are ever ready to plunge.

As a good man is ever bound to manifest his principles in full view of the world; so should he, with a yet intenser solicitude, strive to keep them boldly and vividly expressed to his own mind. He should accustom himself to gaze upon them with profound, and even awful, respect. His soul should be pervaded by a deep abiding sense of their importance, their sanctity, and their authority. Both the understanding and the heart need maintain the most intimate and conscious connection with the pure, sacred springs, from which they derive their light and inspiration. In the great questions of humanity, morals, and religion, with which these latter days are rife, the Christian scholar should even hesitate to yield himself to the guidance of his most virtuous habits, or to the most deliberate and unsuspected of his by-gone conclusions, or to the conservative traditions which he may have imbibed from his converse with good books and wise men. In matters of slight import and perpetual recurrence,

these are sufficient safeguards against erroneous opinion or vicious action, but not in the great struggle for moral and social meliorations in which the educated men of this age are called to engage. He who would command the best resources for this high enterprise, must penetrate deeper than habit, or opinion, or authority. He must live in hourly contact, and conscious, loving communion, with the principles of truth, righteousness, and mercy, that are within him. He must draw from the deep sources of all moral and intellectual power, and require of every cause, which asks sympathy and co-operation, that it obtain afresh the approval of his reason and his conscience. His heart must beat, his bosom heave, and his eye flash, only at the bidding of the great, deep, holy principles, which his own strenuous efforts, and the grace of God, have imbedded in his nature to minister light to his soul, and vigor to his arm, and fire to his eloquence. In the dogmas of such a philosophy must the philanthropist and the Christian seek for strength. Here is the

inexhaustible source of the only species of power of which a good man may be innocently ambitious.

Your thoughts, young gentlemen, have all along outrun my speculations. From the first you anticipated my conclusions. Remote as was our starting-point; abstract and speculative as is our argument; we find ourselves conducted to the true source of wisdom and virtue. Behold, in the cross of Christ, the only sure guaranty for intellectual-excellence and success! Does the student need a lofty, omnipotent, undying motive, to sustain him in his long struggle with labor, disappointment, and temptation; with the world's unfriendliness, and his own manifold infirmities? Such a motive he finds in the gospel, and nowhere else. Are noble sentiments, strong, deep sympathies, and pure, powerful feelings, indispensable agents in the highest intellectual performances? They are supplied in the principles and experiences of that religion which inculcates, as the sum of all righteousness, perfect devotion and perfect benevolence—that "we love the Lord our

God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves." Are the tastes to be elevated, the appetites subdued, and the passions controlled, in order to secure to the mind's operations freedom from all impediments and distracting influences? This miracle, too, the gospel can accomplish. It is profitable for all things. "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," are its legitimate fruits. "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." They are endowed with "whatsoever things are honest, and lovely, and of good report."

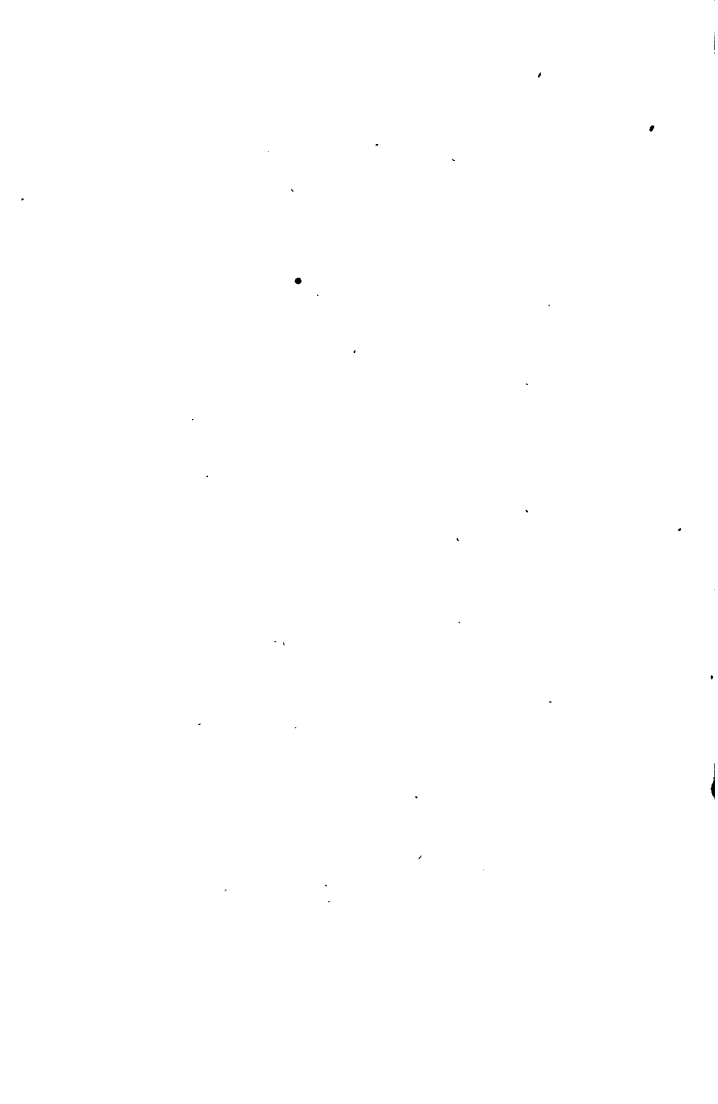
I have brought you to the cross, my friends, and I leave you there. O be content to receive your illumination from this, the great central light of the universe! Hence—if you will cultivate the loftiest ambition, and secure the best attainments—hence draw your inspiration. Hither come for power and for joy; hither bring all your honors and successes, and consecrate them "to Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

Write the name of Christ upon your banner ; exalt the cross high above all idols :  
“*In hoc signo vinces.*” Be

“Siloa’s brook, that flow’d  
Fast by the oracles of God,”

your Castalia.

To such good auspices it is my privilege  
once more affectionately to commend you ;  
and may the grace of our Lord Jesus  
Christ, and the love of God, and the com-  
munion of the Holy Ghost, be with you,  
now and ever. Amen.



## A P P E N D I X.

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NOTE A.—Page 20.

THE literary fraternities, of late so greatly multiplied in our colleges, exert a very important influence upon the formation of both mental and moral character. They have gradually introduced into these institutions a new element, very worthy of attention, whether considered in connection with the maintenance of sound discipline and good order, or with literary improvement. Twenty years ago the students of a college usually formed two associations; for the purpose of mutual improvement in composition and oratory. Two hours in some afternoon or evening of each week were set apart by the authority, or with the consent of the faculty, for these exercises; which were conducted sometimes secretly, but more commonly with some degree of publicity, under such rules and



regulations as were agreed upon for the orderly transaction of business. These societies, though liable to abuses, often contributed in a considerable degree to the improvement of the student. Some skill and facility in extemporaneous speaking were acquired—for which the ordinary routine of college life affords less favorable opportunities. A spirit of inquiry and emulation was awakened; information was elicited; the timid were encouraged to take part in exercises prescribed with their consent, and presided over by their associates; and the general freedom and wide scope, as well as the method, of the discussion, were calculated to introduce into the scholastic arena something of the earnestness and reality of the actual business of life, for which it constituted, to some extent, a useful preparation. The drawbacks upon these benefits were often party spirit, rivalries, jealousies, and suspicions; a loose and vapid style of speaking and writing, contracted in the absence of proper instruction and judicious criticism; and sometimes an undervaluing of the pre-

scribed studies and duties which constitute the student's proper business.

In addition to the two or three associations, which usually embraced the whole body of students, we now have from five or six to a dozen secret societies, aiming at similar objects with the old fraternities, and securing them in various degrees. Some special benefits are probably gained by this minute subdivision, in the closer intimacies and by the freer play of confidence and sympathy which it allows.

Of the *disadvantages* which may grow out of this innovation I only speak theoretically, as the excellent tone of moral sentiment which has usually prevailed in the Wesleyan University is calculated to counteract any unfavorable tendencies in the casual associations of the students. The additional expenditure of money and time is a practical and obvious objection of considerable weight, though slight in comparison with any injurious influences on mental and moral culture which may possibly result from the cause under consideration. The inconsiderable numbers of

which these societies, now so greatly multiplied, must consist, would seem to be less favorable to improvement than larger associations, from lack of stimulus, and the want of an audience; from the narrow sphere of comparison; and from the little variety of talent and attainment presented, whether to awaken emulation or to supply models. It is an easy achievement to shine and win applause in a circle of half a dozen students drawn together, it may be, by the common bond of mediocrity in mind and scholarship; while intellectual exhibitions in the presence of fifty or a hundred intelligent young men, have another sort of ordeal to pass. In the larger association we should always expect some examples of fine taste, sound reasoning, and good speaking, well calculated to awaken and guide a manly ambition to excel. The closer intimacy, and stronger ties, of the smaller fraternities, must also tend to impair the strength, or prevent the existence of the *esprit du corps* of the class and the institution, which constitutes one of the most delightful, enduring, and valuable, satisfactions and reminiscences

of college life. It will be found, I think, except under the most favorable circumstances, that the multiplication of these fraternities tends to excite groundless suspicions; to alienate friends, and prevent the formation of friendships between congenial minds. Even religious ties and sympathies are not always able to resist an influence which may sometimes degrade literary associations into the bigotry, selfishness, and pettiness of a clique. In a state of morals and sentiments less favorable than that with which I have the good fortune to be most conversant, the unreasonable and eager strife of small associations might produce great difficulties in the government of a literary institution. I am, however, bound in justice to add, that no such evils have fallen under my notice; and that instances have come to my knowledge in which the right feeling and self-respect of the fraternity have rendered valuable aid to the cause of good order, and done much to restrain an erring member from indolence, vice, and dishonor.

Not to make any further use of the

foregoing suggestions, they should inspire the student with great caution in his selection among the various societies which invite him to their fellowship on his entrance upon college life. He should, at least, take time to consider, and become acquainted. He should be cautious that he does not commit the keeping of his comfort, his scholarship, his principles, his manners and morals, to associates whose bond of union may be their community of idle habits, vulgar tastes, and conversation ; of low scholarship, and loose or irreligious principles ; and a common aversion to certain laborious studies and duties prescribed in the college course. The societies themselves ought to be ever on their guard against the dangers and abuses to which, however outweighed by advantages, they are unavoidably exposed ; to maintain a spirit of generous, honorable, not of petty, suspicious rivalry, toward their confraternities. They should watch over the conduct of their members with brotherly kindness and solicitude, and seek to promote in them scholarly, gentlemanly, and manly,

habits and aspirations. It should ever be a first principle with them to prosecute their laudable objects in strict subordination to their higher duties as members of a public institution, and in a frank and ingenuous, and honorable spirit, toward its administration and government. Even those slight infractions of law and order which may be deemed venial in an inexperienced individual, ought to be esteemed disgraceful in a society of intelligent young gentlemen, which is presumed to be animated and guided by the combined discretion, and honor, and conscience, of all its members. Associations of students, judiciously conducted, in accordance with the principles here suggested—devoting themselves, not to trivial, but to significant, earnest, manly discussions and inquiries; always kept in harmony with the higher duties and objects of college life; and, I will add, never allowed to interfere with due attention to the public societies, or to introduce into them any of the petty rivalries of the minor fraternities—may become very useful aids to intellectual culture.

## NOTE B.—Page 89.

THE limits of a single discourse would only allow a passing allusion to the subject of this paragraph; though its intrinsic importance might well claim a far more extended consideration. The evil referred to is the besetting sin of educated men in the United States; which, so far as I have enjoyed opportunities of observation, gives them a bad distinction in comparison with those of other countries. With regard to the great body of our graduates it may be affirmed, without qualification, that they make no advancement in classical and scientific knowledge after leaving college. The two or three years usually devoted to professional studies, carry forward the work of mental discipline with some good effect; but, upon their entrance into active life, three-fourths of our scholars bid a final adieu to both literature and science, as if these were only fit for school-boys, and of no further use for mental culture, for graceful accomplishment or elegant recreation.

We have an increasing, though still a very small, class of professionally literary men—authors, editors, philosophers, &c.—who make letters and science their business. We may add to these, the professors and teachers in our leading educational establishments; and now and then a clergyman or physician, chiefly of the younger class: the residue of our liberally educated men not only make no advancement in scholastic attainments, but are actually retrograding to a point where a page of Tacitus, or a proposition in Euclid, becomes to them the profoundest of mysteries. Even in professional learning, little progress is usually made beyond the demand of an imperative necessity; and it is only in the hands of a few that medicine, law, or theology, becomes a really liberal profession. It seems doubtful whether any decided improvement will very soon be achieved. Growth in civilization, and the keener competition and more minute and better-defined division of labor, which must result from a dense population, and the prevalence of a higher general intelli-



gence, will gradually create and *enforce* a demand for better literary qualifications. Meantime, the strong inducements to active business life—the temptations of trade, of speculation, and other methods of money-making—will continue to seduce our educated men to desert or neglect their proper sphere. Above all, the bottomless pit of politics will still swallow up its hecatombs of noble victims. For all this there is really no remedy in our present state of society; and it only remains for our literary institutions to use all diligence in repairing the waste. More than ever is it incumbent upon them to elevate the standard of education, and furnish our rising scholars with the greatest practicable amount of good cultivation; since it is quite certain, with regard to the most of them, that they will cease from all literary improvement as soon as they become their own teachers.

So far as these strictures are applicable to Christian scholars, the evil *ought* to find its cure in their conscientiousness, and their zeal to obtain the highest qualifications for

usefulness. To these moral influences are we indebted for a majority of the examples of literary industry and excellence that still exist among us. A considerable number of clergymen, especially, retain their habits of careful study and mental activity to advanced age. It must be confessed, however, that, as a class, they are far from guiltless of the shortcomings on which we have ventured to comment.

There is one form of this grievous error to which an interesting class of our graduates are specially exposed, and which merits, on that account, a passing notice. I refer to preachers and candidates for the ministry, of whom our graduating classes annually furnish the church with an increasing number. A large majority of these become *itinerant* ministers, a peculiarity in their mode of life which is liable to exert a special influence upon intellectual character. The frequent *changes* involved in this system of ministerial labor, though by no means incompatible with the highest intellectual attainments, and confessedly very favorable to a zealous and

effective discharge of the most important ministerial duties, offer to those who are willing to fall into such a snare, some peculiar temptations to intellectual sloth. The custom of writing sermons, or *skeletons* of sermons, has become much more common than it was among the fathers of the denomination; and all, or nearly all, of our ministers preserve in manuscript such ample minutes of the plan, topics, and arguments, of their pulpit exhibitions, as may serve for future use. The propriety of such a course is unquestionable; and our objections are only directed against the grievous, ruinous abuses, to which it is perverted. After some time spent in the ministry, a studious man finds himself in possession of a good supply of prepared discourses, sufficient, in all probability, to meet the demands of a circuit or station for the one or two years which our plan allows him to spend with the same congregation. By a judicious intermingling of these old sermons with others prepared from week to week, and adapted to the special exigencies of the work, a conscientious, industrious

man, secures invaluable time, not only for pastoral duties, but for such mental culture and new acquisitions as shall insure a constant growth in wisdom, influence, and usefulness, from youth to old age. To those who know how to improve it, our itinerant ministry offers, in this respect, a special advantage over a more permanent settlement; and some of our preachers eagerly avail themselves of its facility. Upon not a few promising young men, however, this peculiarity of our system operates not only disadvantageously, but fatally. When their stock of sermons, or *plans*, has accumulated, so far as to answer current demands upon it, they make no more, and cease to be students. There is an end to all improvement; and they stagger on to premature mental decrepitude under the burden of these some four or five hundred stale, antiquated sermons. In not a few instances, the victims of this stupendous offense against the human understanding, and the claims of God upon his ministers, reach their climacteric at thirty years of age; after which they neither

study nor think, unless we are to dignify as intellectual efforts the half hour devoted, from week to week, to conning over the well-remembered, venerable manuscript. Every one in the least acquainted with the powers and laws of the mind is able to comprehend the stupendous folly of these men. The human intellect gains expansion, and vigor, and acuteness, by activity. *It must work*, or dwindle and starve. It must **THINK**—think habitually, earnestly, consecutively—or it will, ere long, lose its power of thinking. The perusal and reperusal of yellow manuscripts is not study. The recollection and repetition of old sermons is not *thinking*. The mind must do something—must invent something fresh—must work and wrestle with new problems and deep propositions, in order to give hardness and vigor to its own sinews. The hand that wields the hammer, or plies the graving tool, constantly gains strength and skill; but suspended in a sling, it will not be long in forgetting its cunning. The Hindoo devotee who has been stationary ever since he learned to stand on one

foot, has also lost the power of locomotion.

Our objection is not to the quality of the old sermons. They may be very good, and theoretically very well adapted to the existing wants of the hearer. It is possible they are even better than the preacher may now be able to produce. All this may very likely be true, and yet they may be useless to the people, and discreditable to the preacher : while very inferior discourses, fresh from the mint of the soul, and blazing with the fervors of an excited, laboring mind, will awaken profound emotion in the hearer's, as well as the preacher's, heart. Old sermons are preached with good effect by men who are still in the habit of making new ones, and who keep their intellects thoroughly awake by study and invention. They then receive a new endowment of life and power, a new assimilation to the pious spirit, by passing through such an intense resuscitating medium. Without this fresh, vivifying baptism, these repetitions are, irrespective of their intrinsic quality, the stalest and most unsavory of human performances.

They remind us of the desiccated preparations of the botanist, which are quite bereft of all their fragrance, and grace, and charming colors, though one might not be prepared to deny that they still retain a measure of latent medicinal virtue. It may be laid down as a first principle, that he cannot long continue a useful, nor even a popular, preacher, who has ceased to be a student. He must himself gradually lose all relish for the dry, irksome work of memory and repetition, to which he dooms himself. However habit or temperament may enable him to preach with apparent warmth and vivacity, his announcements of truth do in fact no longer bear the sanction and indorsement of his own deep, living convictions; for neither reason, nor conscience, nor faith, are much concerned in the reproduction. If this sort of work is distasteful to the preacher, it soon becomes loathsome to the hearer, with whom all such exhibitions pass for mere routine or declamation. A clerical brother lately said to me, "I know several preachers in the —— Conference, who have not *studied* in ten or twenty years."

Such ministers are only less guilty than those who have not *prayed* in ten years ; for it is quite as practicable to be a good preacher of the gospel without praying, as without studying. No minister can maintain a respectable position, and satisfy the wants of an intelligent congregation, who is not a diligent student. No matter if he has a cart-load of prepared sermons, and they as good as ever Paul preached, he must bring out "things new," as well as old, if he would make his ministrations either profitable or acceptable to the people. *At least half* of the sermons called for by the exigencies of ministerial labor should be produced by current efforts. To say nothing of doing good to others, the study and preparation of one sermon a week is no more than is requisite for the best nurture of mental and moral life. The greatest boon that could befall many preachers, would be the conflagration of their old store of manuscripts. Anything that should induce or compel them to return to studious habits, were better than the mental inactivity which dooms so many good men to actual inefficiency and super-



annuation, at a time of life when experience and hoarded wisdom should qualify them for the most extended usefulness, and the most salutary, effective popularity. Self-educated men are not less—it may be they are even more—exposed to this deadly sin, than the graduates of our colleges. If the latter often mortify their friends, and bring reproach upon the cause of education, by their indolence, and consequent miserable, petty mediocrity; the former, with no less frequency, disappoint the favorable hopes awakened by their early proficiency, and fall back, from a position won by manly efforts, and full alike of honor and of promise, to a grade of performances and aspirations false to all the traditions and anticipations to which such auspicious beginnings had given rise in the church.

No subject connected with our itinerant ministry, and with the great interests providentially intrusted to it, is more worthy of deep, solemn consideration, than that so imperfectly discussed in this note.\* That the evil referred to is not rare among us, every observing man knows full well. That it

must, to whatever extent it prevails, impair the efficiency, the respectability, and the moral integrity of our ministry, is too painfully obvious to require proof or argument. The church had need to watch vigilantly against this great delinquency. Our ministers, both in open conference and in their private intercourse, are wont to exercise over each other a supervision comprehensive and searching, beyond anything known among other denominations. Something might possibly be done, in this way, to mitigate a great, if not a growing, evil. But the remedy chiefly to be relied on, rests with individual conscience, with our young ministers especially, whose mental habits are not yet formed, or if formed, not yet perverted. It is for them to determine whether, with the increasing advantages of education, of many and cheap books, and of more leisure for study, our ministry shall *grow* in grace and *knowledge*; whether our revered itinerancy shall continue to show itself adapted to the increasing intelligence and refinement of the age. That this, and much more, is practicable, we do most devoutly believe;

but the full success of the great experiment demands a great increase of knowledge and intellectual accomplishments among our clergy. Nothing less will do. Nothing less can sustain us where we are, or prevent decline and deterioration. Ardent, self-sacrificing piety, is a qualification always presupposed in a minister of Christ, about which there is no need that anything should be said in this connection, further than to insist upon that particular manifestation of it which leads to thorough, systematic, various, *protracted* study. For this nothing can be taken as a substitute. True, "it is better to save souls than to study." The effect is more excellent than the cause; but it cannot exist independent of its cause: and nothing is more idle than the common plea of much preaching, or much pastoral visiting, as an apology for little study, and poor, stale sermons. Preaching, effectual, good preaching, is what the gospel relies on for success, and this, without diligent study, is an *impossibility*. Whoever attempts to divorce what God has joined together, will be sufficiently rebuked by an unblessed, uncomfort-

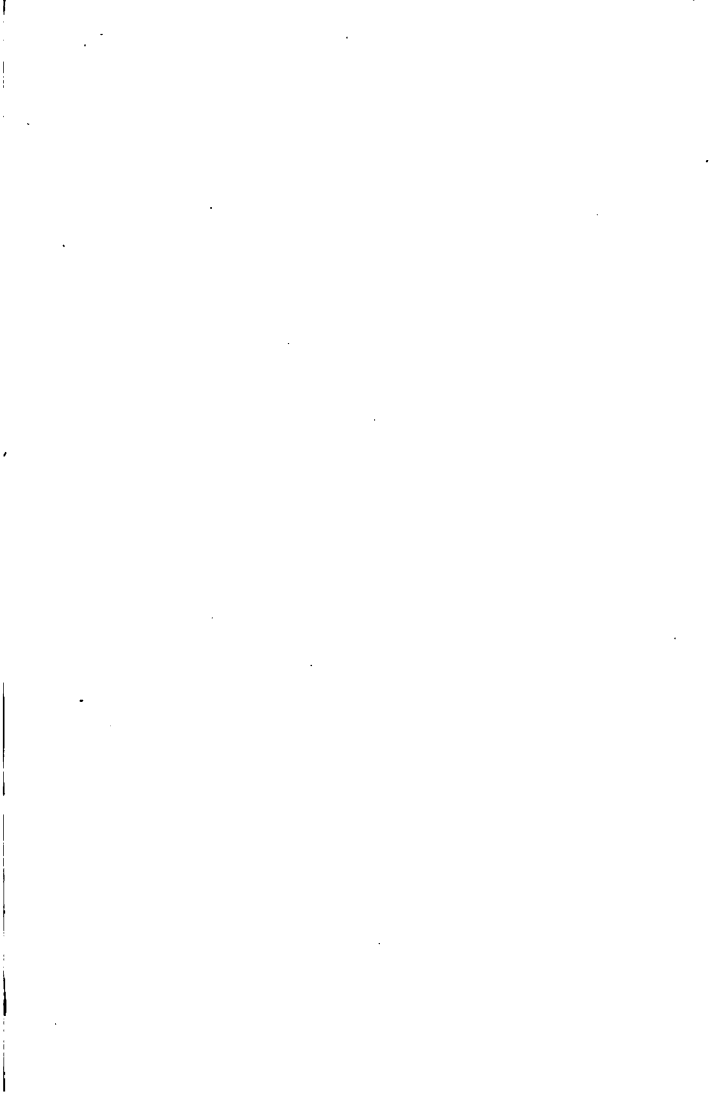
able, unwelcome ministry. He may be popular, and even useful, in the heyday of youth, when personal advantages—sweet tones, glossy ringlets, flowing sympathies—and still more, good hopes generously cherished by the church, and not yet blasted, plead in his favor: but some higher demands await his maturer years. Gray hairs must come crowned with superior wisdom and piety, if they will conciliate reverence and affection; and he alone who does not despair of remaining always young, is excusable for omitting to provide betimes for the exigencies of a period which will sternly require the fulfillment of all early promises.

THE END.













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